MJ12: The FBI Connection

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The purpose of this report is to relate the way in which the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) became involved in the investigation of the Majestic 12 documents in the late 1980s. The story is a strange and convoluted one and involves the surveillance of U.S. citizens and authors, liaisons with the Air Force (and possibly the CIA), and even allegations of Soviet intelligence links to the story.

That the FBI has had involvement in the UFO subject is no secret: in 1976, the researcher (and author of the book *The UFO-FBI Connection*, 2000) Bruce Maccabee obtained via the Freedom of Information Act more than one thousand pages of UFO-related files from the FBI that dated back to 1947; and since then additional files have surfaced on a variety of issues linked to the UFO controversy. But what of the FBI link to MJ12?

The first person to publicly air the original batch of two MJ12 documents – the so-called *Eisenhower Briefing Document* and the *Truman Memorandum* – was the British author Timothy Good, who did so in May 1987 in his book *Above Top Secret* (Sidgwick & Jackson, 1987). Essentially, the first document is a 1952 briefing prepared by Admiral Roscoe H. Hillenkoetter for President-elect Eisenhower, informing him that a UFO and alien bodies had been recovered from the New Mexico desert in 1947. The second is a 1947 memorandum from President Harry Truman to Secretary of Defense James Forrestal, authorizing the establishment of MJ12.

Shortly after Good's publication of the documents, additional copies surfaced in the USA via the research team of Stanton Friedman (a nuclear physicist), William Moore (the co-author of the book, *The Roswell Incident* (Granada Books, 1980) and Jaime Shandera (a television producer).

Moore had been working quietly with a number of intelligence "insiders" who had contacted him shortly after publication of *The Roswell Incident* in 1980. From time to time various official-looking papers would be passed onto Moore, the implication being that someone in the U.S. Government, military or Intelligence Community wished to make available information on UFOs that would otherwise have remained forever outside of the public domain. It was as a result of Moore's insider dealings that a roll of film negatives displaying the documents was delivered in the mail to the home of Shandera in December 1984.

Moore, Friedman and Shandera worked carefully for two and a half years in an attempt to determine the authenticity of the documents. With Timothy Good's release, however, it was decided that the best course of action was to follow suit. As a result, a huge controversy was created that continues on fifteen years later.

But how and why did the FBI become embroiled in the MJ12 affair? Howard Blum is an award-winning author and former *New York Times* journalist, twice nominated by the editors of that newspaper for the Pulitzer Prize in Investigative Reporting. In 1990, Blum's book *Out There* (Simon & Schuster, 1990) was released, and detailed his investigation of U.S. military and governmental involvement in the UFO subject. According to Blum, on 4 June 1987, the UFO skeptic, Philip J. Klass, wrote to William Baker, Assistant Director at the Office of Congressional and Public Affairs. "I am enclosing what purport to be Top Secret/Eyes Only documents, which have not been properly declassified, now being circulated by William L. Moore, Burbank, California, 91505…" The Bureau swung into action.

Jacques Vallee—the UFO author, investigator, and former principal investigator on Department of Defense computer networking projects—stated in his book *Revelations* (Ballantine, 1991) that the FBI turned away from the MJ12 documents in "disgust" and professed no interest in the matter. Papers and comments made to me by the FBI and the Air Force Office of Special Investigations, however, reflect a totally different scenario. Furthermore, there are indications that the FBI launched (or were at least involved in) several MJ12-linked investigations during the late 1980s.

Of those investigations, one definitely began in the latter part of 1988. Howard Blum has stated that of those approached by the FBI "in the fall of 1988," one was a "Working Group" established under the auspices of the Defense Intelligence Agency tasked with looking at the UFO problem. In 1990, Blum was interviewed by *UFO Magazine* (Vol. 5, No. 5), and was asked if the Working Group could have been a "front" for another even more covert investigative body within the U.S. government. Blum's response aptly sums up one of the major problems faced by both those inside and outside of government when trying to determine exactly who knows what.

"Interestingly," said Blum, "members of [the Working Group] aired that possibility themselves. When looking into the MJ12 papers, some members of the group said—and not in jest—'Perhaps we're just a front organization for some sort of MJ12. Suppose, in effect, we conclude the MJ12 papers are phony, are counterfeit. Then we've solved the entire mystery for the government, relieving them of the burden in dealing with it, and at the same time, we allow the real secret to remain held by a higher source.' An FBI agent told me there are so many secret levels within the government that even the government isn't aware of it!"

We also know that what was possibly a separate fall 1988 investigation was conducted by the FBI's Foreign Counter-Intelligence division (which I have been advised operated out of Washington and New York). Some input into the investigation also came from the FBI office in Dallas, Texas (the involvement of the latter confirmed to me by Oliver B. Revell, Special Agent in Charge at Dallas FBI).

On September 15, 1988, an agent of the Air Force Office of Special Investigations contacted Dallas FBI and supplied the Bureau with another copy of the MJ12 papers.

This set was obtained from a source whose identity, according to documentation released to me by the Bureau, AFOSI has deemed must remain classified to this day.

Before addressing the involvement of the FBI's Foreign Counter-Intelligence division in this matter, let us focus our attention on Dallas FBI. On October 25, 1988, the Dallas office transmitted a two-page Secret Airtel to headquarters that read as follows:

> Enclosed for the Bureau is an envelope which contains a possible classified document. Dallas notes that within the last six weeks, there has been local publicity regarding 'OPERATION MAJESTIC-12' with at least two appearances on a local radio talk show, discussing the MAJESTIC-12 OPERATION, the individuals involved, and the Government's attempt to keep it all secret. It is unknown if this is all part of a publicity campaign. [Censored] from OSI, advises that 'OPERATION BLUE BOOK, mentioned in the document on page 4 did exist. Dallas realizes that the purported document is over 35 years old, but does not know if it has been properly declassified. The Bureau is requested to discern if the document is still classified. Dallas will hold any investigation in abeyance until further direction from FBIHQ.

Partly as a result of the actions of the Dallas FBI Office and partly as a result of the investigation undertaken by the FBI's Foreign Counter-Intelligence people, on November 30, 1988 an arranged meeting took place in Washington DC between agents of the Bureau and those of AFOSI. If the AFOSI had information on MJ12, said the Bureau, they would like to know.

A Secret communication back to the Dallas office from Washington on 2 December 1988 read:

> This communication is classified Secret in its entirety. Reference Dallas Airtel dated October 25, 1988. Reference Airtel requested that FBIHQ determine if the document enclosed by referenced Airtel was classified or not. The Office of Special Investigations, US Air Force, advised on November 30, 1988, that the document was fabricated. Copies of that document have been distributed to various parts of the United States. The document is completely bogus. Dallas is to close captioned investigation.

At first glance, that would seem to lay matters to rest once and for all. Unfortunately, it does not. There can be no dispute that the Air Force has played a most strange game with respect to MJ12. The FBI was assured by AFOSI that the MJ12 papers were fabricated. However, Special Agent Frank Batten, Jr., chief of the Information Release Division at the Investigative Operations Center with the USAF, admitted to me on April 30, 1993 that AFOSI is not now maintaining (nor ever has maintained) any records pertaining to either MJ12, or any investigation thereof. This begs an important question. How was AFOSI able to determine that the papers were faked if no investigation on their part was undertaken? Batten has also advised me that while AFOSI did "discuss" the MJ12 documents with the FBI, incredibly they made absolutely no written reference to that meeting in any shape or form. This is most odd: government and

military agencies are methodical when it comes to documenting possible breaches of security.

Richard L. Weaver, formerly the Deputy for Security and Investigative Programs with the U.S. Air Force (and the author of the US Air Force's 1995 near-1000 page report, *The Roswell Repor: Fact Vs. Fiction in the New Mexico Desert*), advised me similarly on 12 October 1993. "The Air Force considers the MJ12 (both the group described and the purported documents to be bogus," stated Weaver. He, too, conceded, however, that there were "no documents responsive" to my request for Air Force files on how just such a determination was reached. Stanton Friedman has also stated that, based on his correspondence with Weaver on the issue of MJ12, he too is dissatisfied with the responses that he received after filing similar FOIA requests relating to the way in which the Air Force made its 'bogus' determination.

Moreover, there is the fact that AFOSI informed the FBI that, "copies of that document have been distributed to various parts of the United States." To make such a statement AFOSI simply must have conducted some form of investigation or have been in receipt of data from yet another agency. On the other hand, if AFOSI truly did not undertake any such investigation into MJ12, then its statement to the FBI decrying the value of the documents is essentially worthless, since it is based on personal opinion rather than sound evaluation.

If the Bureau learned anything further about MJ12 in the post-1989 period, then that information has not surfaced under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act. Perhaps the Bureau, unable to get satisfactory answers from the military and the intelligence community, simply gave up the chase; I do not know. I do know, thanks to Richard L. Huff, Bureau Co-Director within the Office of Information and Privacy, that MJ12 remains the subject of an FBI headquarters Main File that is titled "Espionage." Today that file is in "closed status." But why would the MJ12 documents be linked with a FBI HQ Main File titled "Espionage? It is here that we have to turn our attention to the FBI's Foreign Counter-Intelligence division.

Some of the information related above was published in my book *The FBI Files*. As is often the case with published authors, people who read their books will contact them with information based on the material contained within the pages of the book. In the wake of the publication of *The FBI Files***,** I was contacted by a man about whom I will say little. I will say that he offered that he had formerly served with the FBI in the time period that the FBI was investigating MJ12 and had knowledge of the Bureau's interest in the MJ12 documents. He also supplied information that convinced me that he was genuine. According to the man, the FBI had actually been aware of the intricacies of the MJ12 saga for some two years before Timothy Good published the documents in *Above Top Secret*. However, I was advised, the investigation was intensified after the documents were publicized in the U.S. I was further told that initially there was a fear on the part of the Air Force and the FBI's Foreign Counter-Intelligence people that the MJ12

papers had been fabricated by Soviet intelligence personnel who intended using them as "bait."

That bait was to be used on U.S. citizens who had a personal interest in UFOs but who were also working on sensitive defense-related projects—including the Stealth fighter. The hope on the part of the Soviets, it was suspected by the FBI and AFOSI, was that by offering the MJ12 papers to those targeted sources within the U.S. defense industry, the Soviets would receive something of value of a defense nature in return. The man was unsure precisely how the investigation concluded. He did know, however, that no charges were brought against anyone. This is an ingenious scenario but it must be stressed that my source reiterated that the Soviet theory was simply that—a theory and nothing more. It was, he said, one of several avenues being actively pursued by the FBI at the time. A similar comment was made by Gerald Haines, historian of the National Reconnaissance Office, in his controversial paper, "CIA's Role in the Study of UFOs: 1947–1990."

In a section of the report dealing with CIA involvement in UFO investigations in the 1980s, Haines commented that: "Agency analysts from the Life Science Division of OSI and OSWR officially devoted a small amount of their time to issues relating to UFOs. These included counterintelligence concerns that the Soviets and the KGB were using U.S. citizens and UFO groups to obtain information on sensitive U.S. weapons development programs (such as the Stealth aircraft)."

It should also be noted that the Haines paper claims that no original MJ12 documents were known to exist; however, he neglects to reference the so-called Cutler-Twining memorandum that Moore and Shandera located in the National Archives.

There is further evidence, too, that the FBI has in its archives more information pertaining to MJ12 than has surfaced into the public domain thus far. On November 16, 1988, the UFO researcher Larry Bryant wrote to Ms. Hope Nakamura of the Center for National Security Studies and advised her that in a then-recent conversation with William Moore, he had been informed of Moore's efforts to secure the release of the FBI's file on him. The bulk of the FBI's dossier on Moore (which amounted to no less than fifty-five pages) was being withheld for reasons directly affecting the national security of the United States of America.

Bryant went on to explain that Moore was attempting to find legal assistance in challenging the nondisclosure of the majority of the FBI's file. In a determined effort to lend assistance to Moore, Bryant drafted a lengthy and detailed advertisement that he proposed submitting to a number of military newspapers for future publication.

Titled *UFO SECRECY/CONGRESS-WATCH*, the ad specifically addressed the eye-opening fact that the Bureau's file on Moore was classified at no less than Secret level, and that at least one other (unnamed) U.S. government agency was also keeping tabs on Moore and his UFO pursuits. In particular those pursuits relating to certain "whistle-blower testimony" which Moore had acquired from a variety of sources within

the American military and government. Courageously, Bryant signed off urging those reading the advertisement to contact their local congressman and to press for nothing less than a full-scale inquiry into the issue of UFOs.

Bryant's advertisement *was* ultimately published (in the November 23, 1988 issue of *The Pentagram*, a publication of the U.S. Army); yet as spirited as it was, it failed to force the FBI to relinquish its files on Moore. By 1993, the FBI's dossier on Moore (which was classified at Secret level) was running at sixty-one pages, of which Moore had succeeded in gaining access to a mere six.

In 1989, Bryant, mindful of the FBI's surveillance of William Moore, attempted to force the Bureau to release any or all records on Stanton Friedman. On 2 August of that year, Bryant received the following response from Richard L. Huff. "Mr. Friedman is the subject of one Headquarters main file. This file is classified in its entirety and I am affirming the denial of access to it."

Bryant's efforts on Friedman's behalf came after he (Friedman) had filed FOIA requests with both the Bureau and the CIA. The response from the CIA was that it had no responsive files – except for a 'negative' name check from the FBI, who subsequently refused to reveal details of either the size of the file or its security classification.

On August 28, 1989, Bryant filed suit in the District Court for the Eastern District of Columbia. "My complaint," explained Bryant, "seeks full disclosure of the UFO-related content of the FBI dossier on Stan Friedman. Neither Stan not I have been able to convince the U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation to loosen its grasp on that dossier, which Bureau officials assert bears a security classification." Fortunately, in Friedman's case, a "small portion" of the FBI's file pertaining to him was eventually released (on November 13, 1989) as a result of Bryant's actions. The remainder of the FBI file on Friedman has never surfaced.

What are we to make of all this? Consider the following. The FBI conducted several investigations of MJ12 (via its Dallas Office; its Headquarters at Washington, DC; and its Foreign Counter-Intelligence division). It had close liaison with the Air Force Office of Special Investigations on an MJ12-related operation that may have also involved the CIA in an attempt to crack a Soviet intelligence operation that may or may not have existed. And the fact that the Bureau holds an extensive Secret file on William Moore (co-author of the first book on the Roswell crash and a key figure in the MJ12 saga) and a file of unknown size and classification on Stanton Friedman is more than notable. It also suggests that more information currently exist in the archives of the FBI on MJ12 than has been declassified thus far. Whether or not the FBI was ever fully satisfied by its investigations into the murky world of MJ12 and with what it was told by the AFOSI is debatable, however. The final word I will leave to one of Howard Blum's FBI sources: "All we're finding out is that the government doesn't know what it knows. There are too many secret levels."